



# Ink Tales

Family Guide







Hi. I am your guide  
to Chinese painting. Start below  
to learn about what makes a Chinese  
painting. Later, try to find me in  
the exhibition!

### 1. Material

Chinese paintings are sometimes done on paper or on a fine, thin fabric called silk.

### 2. Mounting

Once complete, Chinese paintings are placed on a fabric mounting. Look around the exhibit; there are many different types of mountings on display.

### 3. Inscription

Chinese paintings often have a written message. The message may be a poem, a note from the artist, or a comment by one of the painting's owners.

### 4. Seals

The red marks are like signatures made into stamps. Chinese paintings may have many seals, as each new owner adds his seal.

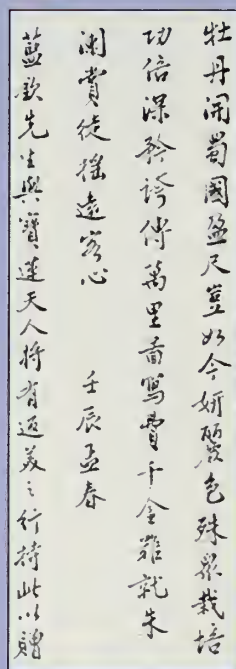
See how many different seals you can find on the paintings in the exhibit, then design your own seal to represent you.



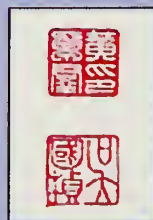
## Ink Tales is a

collaborative, student curated exhibition of Chinese paintings drawn from the collections of Bowdoin and Colby Colleges. The exhibition explores the variety of stories associated with the images, formats, and functions of Chinese paintings.

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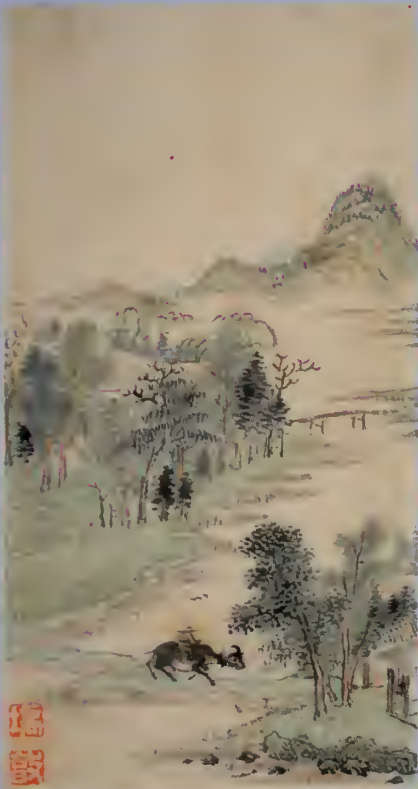
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Huang Zhuoqun (1912-2002); inscription by Wu Guozhen (1903-84), *Peonies and Grasses*, 1952. Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Gift of the Honorable Karl Lott Rankin, Honorary Degree, 1960, and Pauline Jordan Rankin

# LET'S GO ON A JOURNEY...



Look closely. Do you see someone familiar? Trace his path from the woods, back across the bridge, and into the mountains. Did you know that in China, scholars and monks often go to the mountains to think quietly about big questions? How about you? Name one thing you like to do in the mountains and why.

In the mountains, I like to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Above: Zhang Peidun (1772-1847), *Album of Landscapes*. Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Gift of William Bingham II from the Peterson Collection  
Below: Jiao Bingzhen (1689-1726), attrib., *General Zhu Zhixi in His Garden*, 19th-early 20th c. Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Gift of William Bingham II from the Peterson Collection



The painting above is mounted as a handscroll. A handscroll can be very long and include several scenes that together tell a story. Did you know that handscrolls are always viewed from right to left? Tricky, huh! Here, the General Zhu is sending a servant girl on an errand. Find this painting in the exhibit. Begin at the right, look at the figures and describe what you see. Imagine what the General might want.

On the right, \_\_\_\_\_

In the middle, \_\_\_\_\_

On the left, \_\_\_\_\_



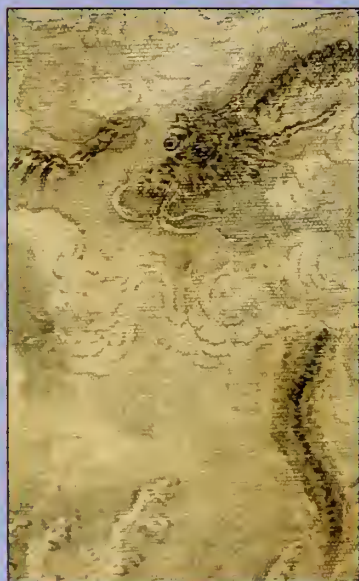
# LOOK FOR SYMBOLS IN CHINESE PAINTINGS...



**PEACHES** are symbols of long-life and make good birthday gifts. Find this painting in the exhibit to see what is next to the peach tree.



**PAIRED MANDARIN DUCKS** stand for faithfulness so we see them at weddings. Is the colorful duck male or female? Why?

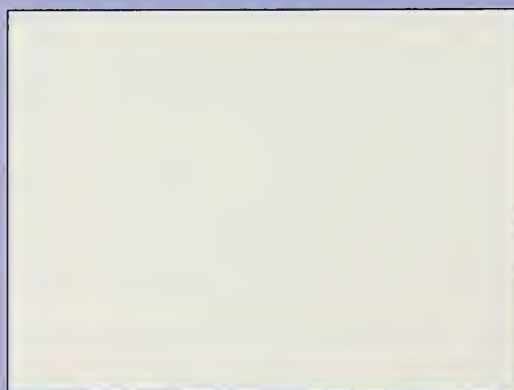


**DRAGONS** stand for strength and power. Is the dragon surrounded by water or clouds? Why?



**LOTUS** flowers represent purity. Although they grow in the mud, their blossoms remain unstained. Who sits on a lotus?

Create your own symbol here! What does it mean?

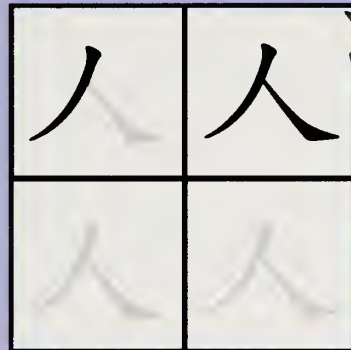
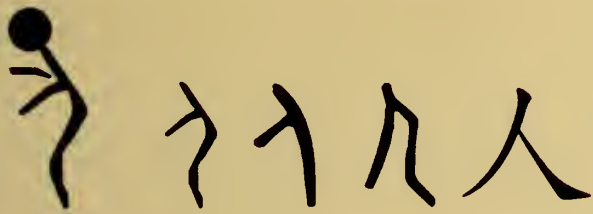



# CHINESE WORDS ARE SYMBOLS, TOO

Chinese characters began as pictures. They looked like the meanings of the words. Slowly, they changed into how we see them today. Practice writing these Chinese characters! Can you find any of them in the exhibition?

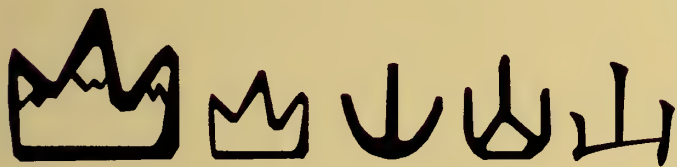
## Person

Chinese: ren



## Mountain

Chinese: shan



## Moon

Chinese: yue







Color these pictures  
when you get home.

## Guanyin

Guanyin is a Buddhist goddess. Buddhism is a religion that aims for each person to reach enlightenment, or a sense of peace. Guanyin has many lucky symbols, such as fish and lotus flowers. Can you find them in this painting?

What are some  
of your lucky  
symbols?

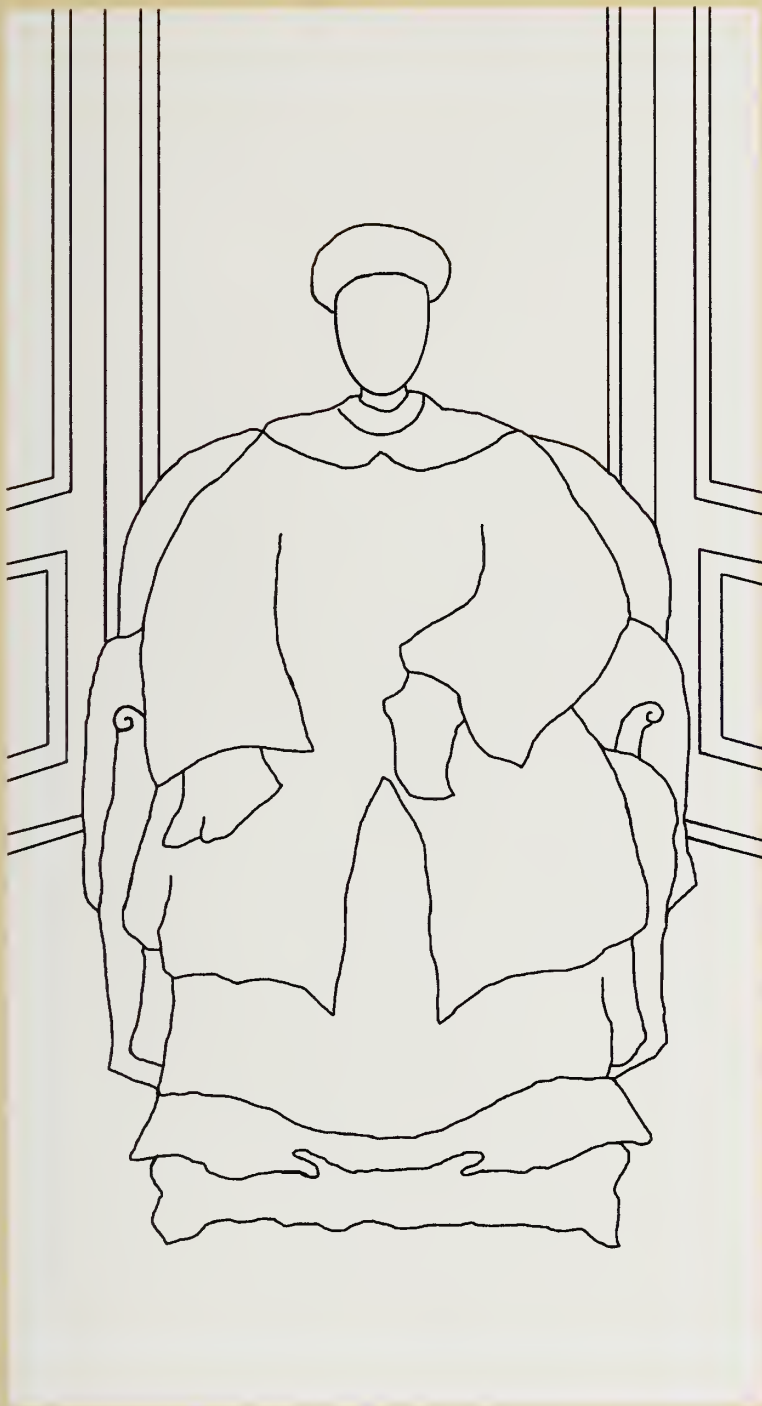


Ding Yunpeng (1547-ca. 1628), attrib., *Guanyin*, 19th-early 20th c.  
Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Gift of William Bingham II from the  
Peterson Collection

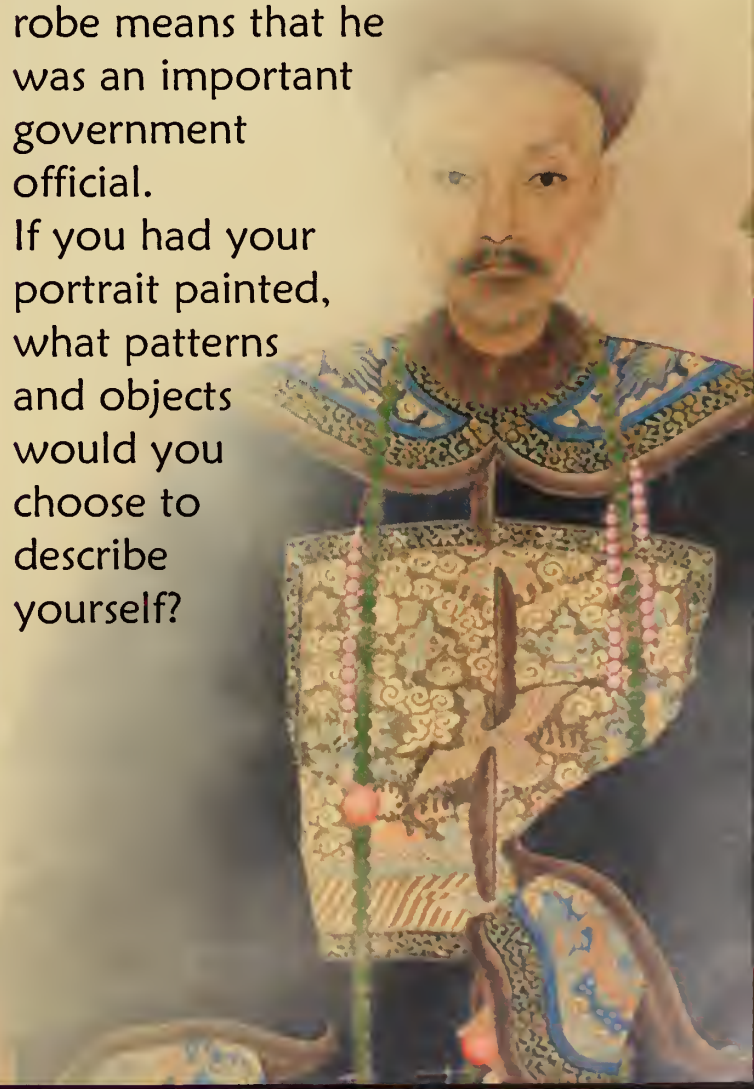
## Portrait of a Manchu Official

This painting is called an ancestor portrait. The man's family would have cared for this painting because the man was a loved relative. His clothes and the objects in the room show what kind of person he was. For example, the decoration at the center of his robe means that he was an important government official.

If you had your portrait painted, what patterns and objects would you choose to describe yourself?



Anonymous, *Portrait of a Manchu Official*, 19th-early 20th c.  
Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Bequest of Charles Potter Kling





# Crossword

## Across

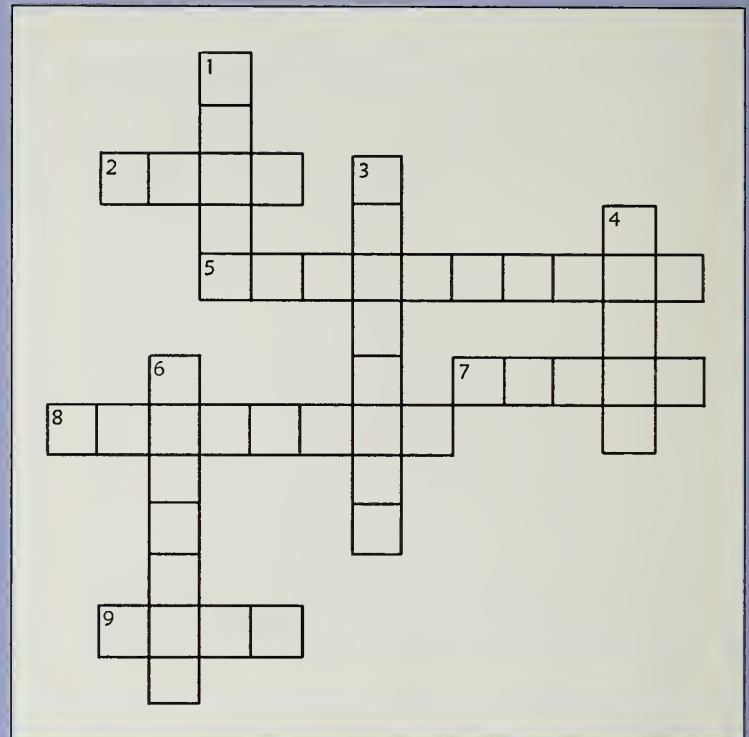
2. A symbol often stamped onto a painting in red; it represents the artist or owner

5. A long format painting that is rolled up and viewed from right to left

7. A water plant that grows in muddy waters and represents purity

8. Once a painting is finished it is placed in a \_\_\_\_\_

9. The type of fabric on which many Chinese paintings are done



## Down

1. A fruit that represents long life

3. Mandarin ducks are often seen at these events

4. A series of paintings bound into a book form

6. A Buddhist goddess seen in this exhibition

Crossword answers: 1) peach 2) seal 3) weddings 4) album 5) handscroll 6) Guanyin 7) lotus 8) mounting 9) silk

## When You Get Home:

Finish the activities in this guide and tell your family about your favorite painting.

## Next Week:

Had fun? Visit the other half of Ink Tales at the Colby College Museum of Art, on view from January 22 - March 8, 2009.

**Next Month:** Read an interesting story about China. Here are a few to get you started:

Liang and the Magic Paintbrush by Hitz Demi

Beyond the Great Mountains: A Visual Poem about China by Ed Young

Voices of the Heart by Ed Young

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On the Cover: Jin Xiang (18th c), *Album of Miniature Sketches*. Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Gift of William Bingham II from the Peterson Collection



Bowdoin

Bowdoin College Museum of Art  
www.bowdoin.edu/art-museum